

threatened. yet the dedication and determination of LULAC's founding members persevered.

Today, this organization has become one of the greatest Hispanic civil rights organizations in America, with an all-volunteer membership and a glowing list of accomplishments.

Representing Latinos from all over the nation including, Guam and Puerto Rico, LULAC has taken the lead toward groundbreaking accomplishments for the Hispanic community.

One of these is particularly dear to me.

In 1945, LULAC took an active role in the fight against segregation in my home County of Orange in California. The Orange County School System kept its schools segregated on the grounds that Mexican children were "poorly clothed and mentally inferior to white children."

Eventually, LULAC was successful in their lawsuit to integrate this school system.

The following year, LULAC, along with Gonzalo and Felicitas Mendez, filed the Mendez v. Westminister lawsuit that ended 100 years of segregation in the California public school system.

Thanks to this suit, I, the child of Mexican immigrants, was able to benefit from a great public education in Orange County.

Many don't realize that the Mendez case laid the foundation for the watershed case of Brown vs. Board of Education eight years later.

Mr. Speaker, one cannot deny the great impact this lawsuit had on bringing greater educational opportunities not just to Hispanic children, but to all children across the nation.

Yet, this is just one example of the great work LULAC has done since their founding in 1929!

This organization has fought for voting rights and the inclusion of Hispanics in the political process.

It has provided access to educational mentoring and tutoring, and has helped fund millions of dollars in scholarships.

And LULAC continues to fight for the betterment of Hispanic workers, especially in the area of Hispanic health issues.

I am very honored to be standing here today to express my appreciation for all of LULAC's accomplishments.

I wish them continued success in the future as they continue their work for improving the lives of Americans in the Hispanic community.

TRIBUTE TO MINE SAFETY APPLIANCES CO.

HON. MELISSA A. HART

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 3, 2004

Ms. HART. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mine Safety Appliances Co. and their Modular Integrated Communications Helmet/Advanced Combat Helmet for being recognized by the U.S. Army's Materiel Command Unit for "one of the Greatest Inventions of 2002."

The Modular Integrated Communications Helmet/Advanced Combat Helmet has been credited with saving the lives of many soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq. It provides the soldier with protection from 9mm handgun rounds and fragmentation in any environment and allows

maximum sensory awareness for the user. Further, it allows for night-vision devices to be integrated with respiratory protective equipment. According to Mine Safety Appliances Co., the helmet provides maximum balance, stability and comfort, while providing the proper size, fit and ventilation.

I ask my colleagues in the House of Representatives to join me in commemorating this valuable invention. Mine Safety Appliances Co. and their helmet have not only improved the lives of soldiers on the battle front but also the lives of the men and women on the home front in Western Pennsylvania.

HONORING FREEDOM RIDES

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 3, 2004

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I would like to honor the Freedom Ride efforts sought to accelerate changes in the South, which had been so inadequately brought about in the courts. As a 13-year-old boy in Bolton, MS, I can recall the surmounted tension in the State of Mississippi in 1961. In tribute to the freedom riders, I would like to submit the following excerpt from Juan Williams' Eyes on the Prize.

In 1947, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) planned a "Journey of Reconciliation," designed to test the Supreme Court's 1946 decision in the Irene Morgan case, which declared segregated seating of interstate passengers unconstitutional. An interracial group of passengers met with heavy resistance in the upper South. Some members of the group served on a chain gang after their arrest in North Carolina. The Journey of Reconciliation quickly broke down. Clearly the South, even the more moderate upper South, was not ready for integration.

Nearly a decade and a half later, John F. Kennedy was elected president, in large part due to widespread support among blacks who believed that Kennedy was more sympathetic to the civil rights movement than his opponent, Richard Nixon. Once in office, however, Kennedy proved less committed to the movement than he had appeared during the campaign. To test the president's commitment to civil rights, CORE proposed a new Journey of Reconciliation, dubbed the "Freedom Ride." The strategy was the same: an interracial group would board buses destined for the South. The whites would sit in the back and the blacks in the front. At rest stops, the whites would go into blacks-only areas and vice versa. "This was not civil disobedience, really," explained CORE director James Farmer, "because we [were] merely doing what the Supreme Court said we had a right to do." But the Freedom Riders expected to meet resistance. "We felt we could count on the racists of the South to create a crisis so that the federal government would be compelled to enforce the law," said Farmer. "When we began the ride I think all of us were prepared for as much violence as could be thrown at us. We were prepared for the possibility of death."

The Freedom Ride left Washington DC on May 4, 1961. It was scheduled to arrive in New Orleans on May 17, the seventh anniversary of the Brown decision. Unlike the original Journey of Reconciliation, the Freedom Ride met little resistance in the upper South.

On Mother's Day, May 14, the Freedom Riders split up into two groups to travel

through Alabama. The first group was met by a mob of about 200 angry people in Anniston. The mob stoned the bus and slashed the tires. The bus managed to get away, but when it stopped about six miles out of town to change the tires, it was firebombed. The other group did not fare any better. It was greeted by a mob in Birmingham, and the Riders were severely beaten. Birmingham's Public Safety Commissioner, Bull Connor, claimed he posted no officers at the bus depot because of the holiday; however, it was later discovered that the FBI knew of the planned attack and that the city police stayed away on purpose. Alabama governor John Patterson offered no apologies, explaining, "When you go somewhere looking for trouble, you usually find it You just can't guarantee the safety of a fool and that's what these folks are, just fools."

Despite the violence, the Freedom Riders were determined to continue. Jim Peck, a white who had fifty stitches from the beatings he received, insisted, "I think it is particularly important at this time when it has become national news that we continue and show that nonviolence can prevail over violence." The bus company, however, did not want to risk losing another bus to a bombing, and its drivers, who were all white, did not want to risk their lives. After two days of unsuccessful negotiations, the Freedom Riders, fearing for their safety, flew to New Orleans. It appeared that the Freedom Ride was over.

At that point, however, a group of Nashville sit-in students decided to go to Birmingham and continue the Freedom Ride. Diane Nash, who helped organize the group, later explained, "If the Freedom Riders had been stopped as a result of violence, I strongly felt that the future of the movement was going to be cut short. The impression would have been that whenever a movement starts, all [you have to do] is attack it with massive violence and the blacks [will] stop." The Nashville students traveled to Birmingham and asked the bus company to let them use their buses. Attorney general Kennedy also leaned on the bus company and the Birmingham police. He was determined to enforce the Supreme Court's decision that called for integration of interstate travel, and he worried that if the Nashville students remained in Birmingham much longer, violence might erupt. On May 17, the Birmingham police arrested the Nashville Freedom Riders and placed them in protective custody. At 2 AM on Friday, the police drove the Riders back to Tennessee, dumping them by the side of the highway at the state line. After they got a ride back to Nashville, 100 miles away, they went right back to Birmingham.

Meanwhile, Governor Patterson agreed to meet with John Seigenthaler, a Justice Department aide and a native of Tennessee. In the meeting, Floyd Mann, head of the state highway patrol, agreed to protect the Freedom Riders in between Birmingham. Attorney General Robert Kennedy then pressured the Greyhound bus company, which finally agreed to carry the Riders. The Freedom Riders left Birmingham on Saturday, May 20. State police promised "that a private plane would fly over the bus, and there would be a state patrol car every fifteen or twenty miles along the highway between Birmingham and Montgomery—about ninety miles," recalled Freedom Rider John Lewis. Police protection, however, disappeared as the Freedom Riders entered the Montgomery city limits. The bus terminal was quiet. "And then, all of a sudden, just like magic, white people everywhere," said Freedom Rider Frederick Leonard. The Riders considered leaving by the back of the bus in hopes that the mob would not be quite as vicious.